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THEOSOPHICAL MANUALS

XV

THEOSOPHY: THE MOTHER OF RELIGIONS

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he Aryan Theosophical Press
Point Loma, California
1907

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THEOSOPHY: THE MOTHER OF RELIGIONS

BY

A STUDENT

The Aryan Theosophical Press
Point Loma, California
1907

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v. 15

PREFACE

THE remarks under this head are intended to be introductory to each of the Manuals.

First, as to the spirit in which they are offered. These manuals are not written in a controversial spirit, nor as an addition to the stock of theories awaiting public approval. The writers have no time to waste in arguing with people who do not wish to be convinced, or who ridicule everything which is new to their limited outlook. Their message is for those who desire to know — those who are seeking for something that will solve their doubts and remove their difficulties. For such, all that is needed is a clear exposition of the Theosophical teachings; for they will judge of the truth of a teaching by its power to answer the questions they ask. People realize, much more now than in the early days of the Theosophical Society, the value of Theosophy;

for the ever-increasing difficulties engendered by selfishness and materialism, by doubt and the multiplicity of theories, have created an urgent demand which it alone can satisfy.

Again, it is necessary to state clearly and emphatically the genuine teachings of Theosophy, as given by the Founder of the Theosophical Society, H. P. Blavatsky, and her successors, William Q. Judge and Katherine Tingley. For, as H. P. Blavatsky predicted, there are persons who have sought to pervert these teachings and turn them into a source of profit to themselves and their own selfish and ambitious schemes. The true teachings do not lend themselves to such purposes; their ideals are of the purest and most unselfish. Hence these persons have sought to promulgate under the name of Theosophy a perverted form of the teachings, from which Brotherliness and other pure motives are omitted, and which contains doctrines which H. P. Blavatsky showed to be maleficent and destructive. As these pseudo-Theosophists have gained a certain amount of notoriety by using the names of the Theosophical Society and its Leaders, it is necessary to warn the public against them

and their misrepresentations. Their teachings can easily be shown, by comparison, to be directly contrary to those of H. P. Blavatsky, whom they nevertheless profess to follow. Instead of having for their basis self-sacrifice, self-purification and the elevation of the human race, these teachings too often pander to ambition, vanity and curiosity. In many cases they are altogether ridiculous, and only calculated to make people laugh. Nevertheless, as these travesties have served to discredit the name of Theosophy and to keep earnest inquirers away from the truth, it is well that the public should know their nature and origin. They are the work of people who were at one time members of the Theosophical Society, but who did not find in it that food for their own personalities of which they were really in search. So they turned against their teachers in wounded pride and vanity, and started little societies of their own — with themselves at the head.

The writers of these Manuals have no personal grievance against any such calumniators. Inspired by a profound love of the sublime teachings of Theosophy, they have made it

their life-work to bring the benefits which they have thereby received within the reach of as many people as possible. And they feel that they will have the hearty sympathy and co-operation of the public in exposing folly and bringing the truth to light.

Theosophy strikes unfamiliar ground in modern civilization, because it does not come under any particular one of the familiar headings of Religion, Science, Philosophy, etc., into which our age has divided its speculative activities. It dates back to a period in the history of mankind when such distinctions did not exist, but there was one Gnosis or Knowledge embracing all. Religion and Science, as we have them today, are but imperfect growths springing from the remnants of that great ancient system, the Wisdom-Religion, which included all that we now know as religion and science, and much more. Hence Theosophy will not appeal to the same motives as religion and science. It will not offer any cheap and easy salvation or put a premium upon mental inactivity and spiritual selfishness. Neither can it accomodate itself to the rules laid down by various schools of modern thought as to

what constitutes proof and what does not. But it can and does appeal to the Reason. The truth of doctrines such as Theosophy maintains, can only be estimated by their ability to solve problems and by their harmony with other truths which we know to be true. But in addition to this we have the testimony of the ages, which has been too long neglected by modern scholarship, but which is now being revealed by archaeologists and scholars, as H. P. Blavatsky prophesied that it would in this century.

It may perhaps be as well also to remind those who would criticise, that the state of modern opinion is scarcely such as to warrant anybody in assuming the attitude of a judge. It would be quite proper for a Theosophist, instead of answering questions or attempting to give proofs, to demand that his questioners should first state their own case, and to be himself the questioner. The result would certainly show that Theosophy, to say the very least, stands on an equal footing with any other view, since there is no certain knowledge, no satisfying explanation, to be found anywhere.

Since the days when the wave of materialism swept over the world, obliterating the traces of the ancient Wisdom-Religion and replacing it by theological dogmatism our religions have had nothing to offer us in the way of a philosophical explanation of the laws of Being as revealed in Man and in Nature. Instead we have only had bare statements and dogmatic assertions. The higher nature of man is represented by such vague words as Spirit and Soul, which have little or no meaning for the majority. The laws of the universe are briefly summed up under the term "God," and all further consideration of them shut off. Then came a reaction against the dogmatism of religion, and man pinned his faith to knowledge gained by study and reflection, limiting his researches however to the outer world as presented by the senses, and fearing to trench upon the ground which dogmatic theology had rendered the field of so much contention. The result of this has been that neither in religions nor sciences, have we any teaching about the higher nature of man or the deeper mysteries of the universe. This is a field which is left entirely

unexplored, or is at best the subject of tentative and unguided conjectures.

Until, therefore, religious teachers have something definite, consistent, and satisfactory to offer, and until science can give us something better than mere confessions of nescience or impudent denials with regard to everything beyond its own domain, Theosophy can afford to assume the rôle of questioner rather than that of questioned, and does not *owe* anybody any explanations whatever. It is sufficient to state its tenets and let them vindicate themselves by their greater reasonableness; and any further explanation that may be offered is offered rather from goodwill than from any obligation.

Theosophy undertakes to explain that which other systems leave unexplained, and is, on its own special ground, without a competitor. It can issue a challenge to theology, science, and other modern systems, to surpass it in giving a rational explanation of the facts of life.

Again, there are some questions which it is beyond the reach of the human mind, in *its present stage of development,* to answer;

and it would scarcely be just to arraign Theosophy for not answering these.

Judgment should in all cases be preceded by careful study. There are always those who will impatiently rush to questions which a further study would have rendered unnecessary; and it is safe to say that the majority of "objections" raised to Theosophical teachings are such as could have been solved by the objector himself, had he been a genuine student. In the ordinary courses of education, scholars are required and are content, to accept provisionally many of the teacher's statements, in full confidence that further study will explain what in the beginning cannot be made clear. In the same spirit an earnest student of Theosophy will be wise enough to hold many of his difficulties in reserve, until, by further investigation, he has gained better acquaintance with his subject. In the case of those who are not willing to adopt these wise and patient methods of study, it may be reasonably questioned whether they are the more anxious to learn or to disprove.

Above all it is sought to make these Man-

uals such that they shall appeal to the heart and not *merely* to the head; that they shall be of practical service to the reader in the problems of his daily life, and not mere intellectual exercises. For there have been in past days books written by persons more distinguished for a certain grade of mental nimbleness than for heartfelt devotion to the cause of truth; and these have appealed only to those people who love intricate philosophical problems better than practical work. But, as H. P. Blavatsky so frequently urged, the message of Theosophy is for suffering humanity; and the great Teachers, whose sole purpose is to bring to mankind the Light of Truth and the saving grace of real Brotherliness can have no interest in catering for the mental curiosity of merely a few well-to-do individuals. Even soulless men, said H. P. Blavatsky, can be brilliantly intellectual; but for those who are in earnest in their desire to reach the higher life intellectual fireworks alone will have little attraction. We intend, therefore, to keep the practical aspect of the teachings always to the front, and to show, as far as possible, that they are what

they claim to be — the gospel of a new hope and salvation for humanity.

These Booklets are not all the product of a single pen, but are written by different Students at the International Headquarters of the UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD AND THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY at Point Loma, California. Each writer has contributed his own quota to the series.

For further explanations on Theosophy generally, the reader is referred to the Book List published elsewhere in this volume and to the other Manuals of this series, which treat of Theosophy and the various Theosophical teachings.

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I

THE UNITY OF TRUTH

THEOSOPHY is another name for the ancient "Wisdom-Religion." But Theosophy is not *a religion* in the ordinary meaning of that word; it is rather the ancient Wisdom which comprised science, philosophy, and religion. This Wisdom may be considered, as to its source, under two aspects. It is the voice of the Divine in man; or it is the teaching of men who have progressed so far on the path of progress that they have become divine, *i. e.*, the mind has become one with the higher consciousness of the God within. Consequently, all Great Souls, or Great Teachers, are men who have reached that high plane which the Bible calls "the unity of the Spirit"; and their teachings must agree in essence, though the forms they assume may vary from age

to age. It also follows that the teachings of such advanced Beings, and the divine voice in each of us, must harmonize, for the Divine is One, is Wisdom itself, and all its teachings must be in harmony. No argument is needed to convince any one who understands Theosophy in this light, that it must be the "mother of religions." But all do not understand Theosophy in this light. Some look upon it as a mere cult invented by H. P. Blavatsky; though she herself repeatedly asserted, as did Jesus, "my teaching is not mine, but his that sent me." (John vii. 16). Others have regarded Theosophy as only a recrudescence of old heresies. These objections to Theosophy are mutually destructive; for it is a logical law that contradictories may both be false, but cannot both be true.

For all those who harbor such misconceptions it is necessary to place before them some evidences that will appeal to the reason; though true conviction springs rather from the inner higher nature of man than from the mere mental perception of things. Hence the old

saying: He who is convinced against his will is of the same opinion still.

The teaching given out by H. P. Blavatsky did not originate with her. Not only does she assert this very plainly, declaring that she presents "a nosegay of culled flowers, and only the string is hers that ties them" (*The Secret Doctrine,* I, xlvi); but the whole trend of her writings is to remove the veils from the various teachings given in past ages, East and West, and to show the true harmony, the essential unity, both in nature and in purpose, underlying all those teachings, when rightly understood.

It would not, however, be just to H. P. Blavatsky, nor to the message given through her, to suppose it to be merely a repetition of some ancient teachings to be found in various philosophies or religions. It should be clearly understood that she has made a great advance upon the past. The world today needed that the ancient Wisdom-Religion should be given out more fully than on former occasions, and this H. P. Blavatsky has done.

Of course she has given out but a small portion of the "*Gupta Vidyâ*," the "Secret Doctrine," yet what she has given out is more than the world, at present, is advanced enough to assimilate in its fulness. The tendency of the modern mind along scientific lines, with a strongly materialistic bent, necessitates that this aspect of the Ancient Wisdom should be brought forth to meet the needs of the age. Consequently many things about the nature and origin of man and of the world, not to be found elsewhere, are given out in *Isis Unveiled,* in *The Secret Doctrine,* and in H. P. Blavatsky's other writings.

In the time of Jesus there was little need for modern scientific teachings, and they were not given *as a system of technical knowledge.* Then moral and spiritual teachings, and a life which was an embodiment of these, was the thing especially needed. This line of teaching is still needed, and will be for a long time to come, but something more is required now. The advances made in geology, astronomy, and other branches of science, called for more light on

those lines, and this has been given. The teachings given out by H. P. Blavatsky are really a *revelation,* in the old sense of the word; they are the unfolding of what the ordinary mind could not of itself have discovered. Yet, the truths, the facts, always existed for those whose divine nature was able to see them, and to impress this knowledge on the recipient intellectual nature.

It will thus be seen that the claims of Theosophy are very large; larger indeed than the horizon of our present knowledge; for it distinctly affirms that the revelations which have been given are only a portion of that vast treasury of knowledge which we shall yet explore; and which, even now, is known to our Elder Brothers, who are the real Custodians of the Divine Wisdom-Religion. In other words, all existing religions have presented only a fragment of the TRUTH. Some religions, or systems of philosophy, have emphasized one aspect of Truth, others another aspect of it, according to the state of the world at the time. As man is a Soul, the great need

of ordinary mankind in every age has been moral and spiritual; therefore all religions have, in varying degrees, ministered to the moral and spiritual progress of mankind. But in addition to this, some have contained a strong philosophical element, others a more practical element. It was not, however, until our own day that what is called the scientific element has been made publicly prominent, as it has been in *The Secret Doctrine* and in other writings by H. P. Blavatsky. While, according to her own statement, she has given out to the world but a small portion of that vast wisdom of which her Teachers are the Custodians, yet she has given enough to stimulate the mind of scientific men all over the world for the remainder of this century, and longer.

It is well known to students of Theosophy that already not a few things which H. P. Blavatsky revealed in her writings have been confirmed by the investigations of the learned. And no doubt many of the things not as yet accepted by scientific men will be corroborated

in the not distant future. Already every new find in the domain of archaeology and in kindred branches of science, is tending to vindicate H. P. Blavatsky's teaching regarding the great antiquity of humanity. The very dwarfed notion of chronology which prevailed in the West, owing to mistaken views of the Bible, is passing away. A saner conception of evolution is gaining ground as the result of the great light which Theosophy throws upon man's past. A sounder knowledge of psychology is possible as a result of what we now know of man's sevenfold nature, and of the various lines of his evolution. In a very true sense we have revealed unto us new heavens and a new earth. Before the close of this century the world will awaken to the wonderful revelation which has been given in the Theosophic unfoldment of the present age. Then there will be no need to prove that Theosophy is the mother of religions, for the fact will be recognized by all who are able to form a just judgment.

The great mission of Theosophy is to *unify*.

Universal Brotherhood is the unification of Humanity, and the Elder Brothers have planted its seed in the soil of the last century, and of this century.

Right knowledge, right feeling, right action: by these three chiefly will men be brought to realize that "Unbrotherliness is the insanity of the age," as Katherine Tingley has said. It is always most necessary to *live* Theosophy in order to lift humanity to something higher. And, as part of that right action, right feeling — a really kind and loving disposition to those we would help — must inspire it as its heart and life. But, *in addition to these all-important factors in genuine Theosophy, there is needed that extended knowledge which gives life a basis in sound philosophy.*

The more man advances the more he seeks to solve the riddle of existence. Corresponding to the notions of past, present and future, man yearns to know his own nature, whence he has sprung, and what is his goal. He also seeks some rational explanation of this universe of which he feels himself a part. To

these questions Theosophy has in all ages given an answer, but today that answer is fuller than ever before. The Ancient Wisdom has always existed, and always exerted an influence upon the races of mankind through all the ages. While it is impossible to give in detail the workings of the great Theosophical Movement throughout the centuries, there are some things which are well known, and which cannot fail to bring conviction to the open-minded inquirer.

II

SOME OF THE TEACHINGS

AT the outset it may be well to state briefly some of the Theosophical teachings concerning the origin, nature, and destiny of man, and of the universe. This will give definiteness to the task of comparing the different religions and philosophies with each other, and will make it easier to connect them with their common source, the Ancient Wisdom-Religion.

One of the first and most important things which Theosophy places before us, is the *Law of Periodicity* which pervades the universe as a whole, and is seen in all its parts. The second thought is the *Unity of Being*. The going forth or manifesting of the One Life is called the Great Breath; and the out-breathing and in-breathing of man is a *type* of the outflow and return of the Divine Creative

Energy. Of course human language and human conceptions must be inadequate to deal with the Eternal, the Absolute; and this truth must always be kept in mind as we use the terms of the finite and concrete to speak of the Infinite. The One Absolute Life, or Being, is conceived as the source of what is called the Unmanifested Logos, or Word; which, in turn, produces the Manifested Logos, and returns unto Itself. From this Manifested Word, existence proceeds by definite stages, or planes, until we have, at last, this universe of suns and planets. This is the going forth of the Great Breath, or manifestation, or existence, or creation. The return of the Great Breath is the universal re-becoming one with the Absolute. Thus, evolution implies involution. Day and night, activity and rest, birth in the objective, and return to the subjective, these are the ways of Nature.

From this it follows that the Divine is immanent everywhere, and in all things; not as contained in them, but as the One Reality within, or behind, every appearance. With

startling force the words of the New Testament come before one's mind — "Because I live, ye shall live also." (John xiv. 19). Or the words of the *Bhagavad Gîtâ* — "I established this whole universe with a single portion of myself, and remain separate." (Chap. x). It also follows that the Infinite Plan, Wisdom, or Purpose, must be manifested on all planes of the universe. Or, in other words, the great and the small, the macrocosm and the microcosm must be images of each other. "As above, so below," said the old philosophers. "God made man in his own image," says the Old Testament.

Theosophy has given a much fuller teaching than was known to the world before, concerning the septenary nature of the universe, and of all things therein. This truth was known publicly to some extent in ancient times, as we see from the number seven being so sacred among the Hebrews, and also in India, Egypt, and other countries. This is one of the special ways in which the Divine Plan of the Universe is stamped upon each of its component parts.

As the image of the sun is seen in each of the myriads of bubbles on the surface of the river, so is the Divine reflected in all. The Divine transcendence, and the Divine immanence, these are the two great and complementary conceptions of Life which sages have taught in all ages. In the present day the forward movement of thought seems to emphasize chiefly the fact of the Divine immanence; but in other ages the Divine transcendence was often dwelt upon almost exclusively. It is at this point that Theosophy renders such important service to the various great religions and systems of philosophy, by unfolding the fundamental truths which all contain in part, but which none manifest very clearly. It also gives us a rational conception of the universe, which avoids the dualism of some ancient philosophies, and reconciles the Divine transcendence, and the Divine immanence. In the *Bhagavad Gîtâ*, a Theosophical treatise, this immanence of the Divine is stated plainly; and yet there is no confining or limiting of the Infinite by the manifested:

I established this whole universe with a single portion of myself, *and remain separate.*

And again:

But there is another spirit designated as the Supreme Spirit — Paramâtmâ — which permeates and sustains the three worlds. As I am above the divisible, and also superior to the indivisible, therefore, both in the world and in the *Vedas* am I known as the Supreme Spirit.—(Chap. xv).

In the New Testament we have teaching that is very similar, and which has the ring in it of the ancient Wisdom:

For in him we live and move and have our being; as certain also of your own poets [*e. g.,* Aratus, and Cleanthes] have said, for we are also his offspring.—(Acts xvii. 28)

For of him, and through him, and unto him, are all things.—(Rom. xi. 36)

The words of Paul in I Cor. xv, remind one strongly of that "Great Day Be With Us," which the Wisdom-Religion speaks of as the return of all to Absolute Being. Paul says:

Then cometh the end, when he shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father. . . . Then

shall the Son also himself be subjected to him that did subject all things unto him, that God may be all in all.

This is surely the return of the Great Breath, the end of one period of manifestation.

Theosophy, as revealed to us, deals with only a few points of the great Involution and Evolution. For instance, it deals chiefly with our solar system; and, more particularly with life on this planet during a portion of the Fourth Round; though many other things are touched upon in a general way so as to give mankind a rational conception of the Universe, and especially of human life on this planet. But the portion of the Wisdom-Religion thus revealed to us far transcends in fulness and in scope any and all existing teachings, and clearly points to the Ancient Wisdom as the great mother of religions.

In the course of ages the various religions wandered far from their source, and forgot, or almost forgot, that source. But we have now begun a movement toward UNITY on all

lines. Comparative language, comparative literature, comparative religion; these and other similar studies indicate that the trend of thought is toward a recognition of unity as underlying all superficial differences of individuals, or of nations. Universal Solidarity is thus a movement towards that Great Center from which all have proceeded, and to which all must return.

In this return, or re-becoming, the definitely religious impulse or consciousness manifests itself in various ways. Religion may be likened to the homing instinct in some pigeons, which enables them, though in distant and strange places, to turn their flight homeward. Among men of various lands and ages we find expressions of this homing instinct. "Thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations," says the Psalmist. And in Wordsworth we have a similar idea: "trailing clouds of glory do we come from God, who is our *home*." In the Gîtâ it is written, "Thou who art the dwelling-place of the universe"; and, "Thou art the final supreme receptacle."

ASPIRATION ONE WITH RELIGION

ALL real religion is at bottom this consciousness of the Divine, and the resistless aspiration of the Soul towards the Eternal. It is that celestial attraction by which our souls are moved and swayed in their courses, as the planets are in their orbits by the Sun. Religion is the great binding force. But we are conscious of another force in us, the impeding force of our lower nature. Therefore the message of all religions must be, how to cultivate or develop the true nature, the homing instinct in us, and how to overcome the hindering influence of the lower self.

The kingdom of heaven is within. Man is a temple of God. The purpose of religion is the unfolding of the heaven within, until it fills the world. Or, it is the manifesting of the Divine in man until the whole man is taken up into, or becomes one with the Divine. A true and clear perception of the purpose of life is most essential towards realizing that purpose. It is also of great importance to

know ourselves, to *know what we are,* and *how* we have come to be what we are; to know the various principles of our constitution, that we may work intelligently towards the perfecting of our being. This scope is fully covered by the Wisdom-Religion, or Theosophy. It explains to us our origin, and the origin of the Universe. It explains, not only our duality, but our sevenfold nature; and shows us how man is a little image of the Universe and embodies in himself all the planes of the Universe, from Âtmâ, or pure Spirit, to the visible outer sheath, the material body. We are thus, at one and the same time, made aware of the Divine immanence, and of the Divine transcendence; and we are, therefore, the better able to explain and sympathize with the various aspirations and movements of the human mind as shown in the different forms of religion, from age to age, in different lands.

While we discriminate between those religions which keep closest to the great meaning and purpose of life, we are able to judge charitably even of those lower forms of religion

which savor more of man's lower nature than of his higher. We call to mind the words of Krishna in the *Bhagavad Gîtâ:*

> In whatever form a devotee desires with faith to worship, it is I alone who inspire him with constancy therein.

A similar expression is found in the book of the Acts:

> Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to him.

What an amount of misery might have been averted if these words of Peter had always been kept in mind by professed Christians, and especially by that Church which leans so much on Peter!

Theosophy having thus made plain for us the nature and purpose of true religion, helps us the better to understand how it is that religions decline as they cease to minister to the higher nature of man, and become subservient to the lower self, or to selfishness, in some of its manifold aspects. For it is a

lamentable fact, and one of the most prominent things in history, that religions in most, if not in all cases, very soon become deflected from the lofty spirit and purpose of their founders. This fact is well illustrated by the parable of the enemy who came and sowed tares among the good seed, while men slept. It is partly on account of this corruption which soon takes place in religions, that the ancient Wisdom-Religion needs to be again and again declared to the world in forms suited to human needs. The new revelation is new in its form, and in some of its details, but it is the Old Truth which has been from the beginning. H. P. Blavatsky clearly states that her message is not a new thing, but part of the Ancient Wisdom. We find in the New Testament a similar statement. St. John says he does not write a new commandment, but an old commandment which had been from the beginning, *viz.*, brotherly love. And in the East it is an ancient teaching:

> Hatred does not cease at any time by hatred; hatred ceases by love; this is an *old* rule.

Religion, being in its essence the consciousness of the Divine, and the impulse or attraction towards Divinity, has ever largely consisted, in its manifestation, of some means by which this impulse might be realized. The different "cults" are mostly modes or methods by which men seek to realize the purpose of existence. However dimly recognized in some cases, the object is one and the same, namely, return to the Divine. H. P. Blavatsky says:

> There is not a religion, whether Christian or heathen, that is not firmly built upon the rock of ages — God and immortal spirit. (*Isis Unveiled*, I, 467)

Theosophy helps us to understand that all religions have the same great goal in view. This, of itself, should tend to remove the prejudices that spring up in the various religions, and should help to foster a spirit of unity among all who are striving towards the same goal, whether they call it heaven, paradise, or by any other name.

III

THE ORIGINS OF RELIGIONS

THEOSOPHY also throws much light upon the origin of the various "cults"; for, by unfolding the original teaching, or some of it, we are helped very much in tracing many of the divergencies which have arisen.

It will be readily seen that among all religions the idea of *Sacrifice* has been very prominent. It is well known that the ordinary evolutionist looks to savage life as illustrating the genesis of modern man, and his cults. The savage personifies the forces of nature, and offers sacrifices to gain their favor. But Theosophy teaches that races, like individuals, have their periods of youth, maturity, and old age. The savage, in some cases at least, is but the decayed remnant of what was once a great race. It is said that the aborigines of

Australia are a remnant of the Third Root Race, which, at its zenith, was much more spiritual than the sub-races of the Fourth Root Race. The idea of sacrifice has undergone a long degradation, and it is only within the last few thousand years that we find a gradual movement away from gross notions of sacrifice to more spiritual conceptions. Even during the short space of Hebrew history, outlined for us in the Old Testament, we see what a hard battle the spiritual teachers had to wage against the bulk of the people, and the materialistic tendency of the priesthood. And, in this respect, Semitic history is a close parallel to the history of India, Egypt, and every other country.

In the Greek and Latin classics, from the time of Homer onward, we find various kinds of sacrifices mentioned. From the ancient histories or relics of many countries we find evidence that sacrifice of some kind was almost universal. In some special cases human sacrifices were offered, but generally animals were offered in sacrifice as a substitute. From very

early times the common articles of food were used as offerings. In later times the prophets declared that such offerings were not required; that the real and true sacrifice was the giving up of the lower nature to the higher. This was a return to something like the original meaning of sacrifice. Whatever hinders the return God-ward must be given up. The lower must give way to the higher; the animal nature to the god within. This is what is taught in the *Bhagavad Gîtâ:*

> Some devotees give sacrifice to the Gods, while others, lighting the subtler fire of the Supreme Spirit, offer up themselves. (Chap. IV)

We have a similar teaching in Rom. xii. 1:

> Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable (or spiritual) service.

The reasoning in this passage and in I Cor. iii, and elsewhere, is that we are temples of God, and therefore the whole of the tabernacle or temple should be sacred and holy, and devoted to the Divine Light of the Holy

of Holies. The whole of life should be held sacred:

Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

So also, in the *Bhagavad Gîtâ,* we are taught:

Whatever thou doest, O son of Kunti, whatever thou eatest, whatever thou sacrificest, whatever thou givest, whatever mortification thou performest, commit each unto me. (Chap. IX)

The spiritual meaning of sacrifice was always the inner teaching. The tendency to materialize figurative teaching is seen in regard to nothing more clearly than in this matter of sacrifice. In some of our modern Theosophical writings the language is highly figurative, as it was in the ancient teaching, and we can well imagine that a materialistic mind might very soon degrade the spiritual to the carnal. For instance, in *Light on the Path:*

Before the soul can stand in the presence of the Masters its feet must be washed in the blood of the heart.

In the light of this we may read that saying

in Heb. ix. 22, "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." And we can see how the religions of the world have perverted the ancient teaching, and carnalized the great spiritual truth, that in the return God-ward, the lower nature must be given up or consecrated to the Divine Self within. St. Paul, being acquainted with the ancient Wisdom-Religion, spoke of "dying daily"; and being "dead unto sin, but alive unto righteousness"; and felt that "though the outer man perish the inward man is renewed day by day." These and many similar passages must be familiar to all; and yet, lamentable and almost incredible though it may be, it is nevertheless the fact that orthodox *Churchianity*, the world over, Romanist and Protestant, is based on myths misunderstood, and symbolic language materialized. The whole "scheme of salvation," in a few words, is this: Adam, and all his descendants, through him as their federal head and representative, became subject to death on account of the broken law. Christ, the second Adam, died in the room of humanity, and having paid

the legal penalty of physical blood, all who believe in him are saved, and all who do not are lost. Also, theologians have always maintained that the animal sacrifices of the Old Testament prefigured the (literal) perfect sacrifice of Jesus.

Slowly, very slowly, mankind is awakening from the nightmare of ages, the perversion of teachings which were once lofty and spiritual, into dogmas revolting to reason; but which in the name of religion ministered to the lower selfish element of man's nature, and were therefore popular or "orthodox" in all ages.

Nothing has been more degraded than the ideas of sacrifice, substitution, atonement, and yet, as is so often the case, great spiritual truths do exist of which the ordinary dogmas are hideous caricatures. Theosophy teaches today, as it did long before the dawn of ordinary history that the very universe exists through sacrifice, but *not* sacrifice which is a pain, or a penalty, as we commonly conceive it to be. It is taught that the great Helpers

of Humanity sacrifice themselves for weaker lives. There is a passage in the first volume of *The Secret Doctrine* which is full of grandeur; it is where the SILENT WATCHER is spoken of as the GREAT SACRIFICE (p. 207).

It is he who holds spiritual sway over the *initiated* Adepts throughout the whole world. He is, as said, the "Nameless One" who has so many names, and yet whose names and whose very nature are unknown. He is *the* "Initiator," called the "GREAT SACRIFICE." For, sitting at the threshold of LIGHT, he looks into it from within the circle of Darkness, which he will not cross; nor will he quit his post till the last day of this life-cycle. Why does the solitary Watcher remain at his self-chosen post? Why does he sit by the fountain of primeval Wisdom, of which he drinks no longer, as he has naught to learn which he does not know — aye, neither on this Earth, nor in its heaven? Because the lonely sore-footed pilgrims on their way back to their *home* are never sure to the last moment of not losing their way in this limitless desert of illusion and matter called Earth-Life. Because he would fain show the way to that region of freedom and light, from which he is a voluntary exile himself, to every prisoner who has succeeded in liberating himself from the bonds of flesh and illusion. Because, in short, he has sacri-

ficed himself for the sake of mankind, though but a few Elect may profit by the GREAT SACRIFICE.

It is under the direct, silent guidance of this MAHÂ — (great) — GURU that all the other less divine Teachers and instructors of mankind became, from the first awakening of human consciousness, the guides of early Humanity. It is through these "Sons of God" that infant humanity got its first notions of all the arts and sciences, as well as of spiritual knowledge; and it is they who have laid the first foundation-stone of those ancient civilizations that puzzle so sorely our modern generation of students and scholars.

And what is true on the higher planes is also true regarding the higher nature in each of us. The descent into human forms of the Sons of Light, about 18 million years ago, in the latter half of the Third Root Race, was the manifesting of the Higher Ego, or Christos, in man. For it is truly said: "We are temples of God and the spirit of God dwells in us." Man's nature being sevenfold, his evolution has been on several planes, and not on the physical alone, as the ordinary Darwinian supposes. The Christos in each of us has made the great sacrifice in descending into matter

in order to guide, purify, and finally make one with itself the lower nature. This is the real at-one-ment, or atonement, of which the orthodox dogma is truly an awful misconception. The Christ is crucified in each of us, and must continue to be so until the lower nature is raised up, and made fit for union with the God within us. That is the great day of at-one-ment. Then we shall be able to say in our whole nature: "Not my will but thine be done." Then the sacrifice of the lower self will be complete; it will have ascended in the flame of perfect love. Then the soul can "stand in the presence of the Masters."

The universe is a continual "becoming." The descent of spirit into matter is the "fall of man." Man is himself the fallen angel. Jesus said, quoting from Psalm lxxxii, 6, "Ye are Gods, and all of you are children of the Most High," and he added, "the scripture cannot be broken." (John x. 35)

The ancient Wisdom-Religion may be found all through the Bible; and in the sacred writings of every great religion. The cross itself

is one of the oldest symbols in the world. All history is a symbol. The life of each individual is a type of the whole. It must be so, as man is the little image of the universe; his sevenfold nature corresponding to the seven planes of the Cosmos. It need not then be wondered at that the story of Jesus the Christ is a picture of what takes place in the universe, and in each individual, nor need we marvel to find all Great Souls manifesting many points of likeness. St. Paul cried out, "I protest I die daily." There is a double sacrifice taking place in each of us; that of the Christos, which, like Prometheus, suffers, and is chained to matter as a result of bringing from heaven the celestial fire to hasten the evolution of the lower nature in man; and there is also the sacrifice of the lower self as it dies to its desires and passions and rises into the higher life of the spirit. The consciousness of the necessity of this sacrifice of the lower nature has led men in many lands to practise great austerities. Men, like Simon Stylites, have perched themselves on lofty pil-

lars, or in some other manner have tried to separate themselves from their lower natures by separating themselves from the world. They have tortured the body thinking to develop the soul. This is a sad misconception of the truth. *The Voice of the Silence* says:

> Think not that breaking bone, that rending flesh and muscle, unites thee to thy "Silent Self." Think not that when the sins of thy gross form are conquered, O victim of thy Shadows, thy duty is accomplished by nature and by man. The blessed ones have scorned to do so.

Another phase of the same misconception is seen in those philosophical systems which regard matter as something evil in itself. It is "matter out of place," or anything out of place, which is the evil. The evil is when the lower nature seeks to drag down the higher nature, instead of being purified and lifted up by it.

IV

UNITY THE KEYNOTE OF THE NEW ERA

IT is often said that Theosophy does not oppose any religion as such, but seeks to enable each person to find in his own religion the primal truths which are one and the same in all religions. This is very true, and the subject of sacrifice illustrates this. Theosophy alone is able to explain the fundamental truths in this idea of sacrifice; and in so doing it helps us to see how misconceptions have arisen. There is the sacrifice of the universe, in which every step downward of the Divine Spirit into manifestation is a sacrifice. Or, to put it in another way, Spirit clothes itself in denser and denser sheaths. This is the going forth of the Great Breath. Redemption is the re-becoming, or the return Home. Each stage of the return is a sacrifice, the trans-

formation of the lower nature into the higher, it is being born again not only by water, but also by fire. The lead is transmuted into gold. Each step upward, though a seeming death, is really not destruction, but transformation of life. Nothing is lost, or "cast as rubbish to the void."

Looking at the matter in this light, how sad the spectacle of men in many lands and ages offering up human sacrifices, or even offering up animals! Well might the prophet exclaim:

> To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices? . . . I delight not in the blood of bullocks or of lambs. . . . Who hath required this at your hand to trample my courts? Wash you, make you clean. . . . Cease to do evil, learn to do well.—Isaiah i. 12, 17.

And again:

> Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the bands of the yoke and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke. Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, etc?—Isaiah lviii. 6, 7.

With a departure from the true original

meaning of sacrifice, there arose a false notion of that great law of the universe by which the higher sacrifices itself for the lower, in order to raise it to a higher plane. The selfishness of the lower mind, working on this for ages, elaborated a scheme of salvation in which, instead of the lower dying for the higher, *something else* should be *substituted* as a sacrifice. Finally, in modern orthodoxy, we have the sublimest facts of the universe degraded into mere legal transactions, in which the pure is by a fiction regarded sinful, and the sinner esteemed just. And yet Jesus himself taught the law of Karma plainly, and declared that the transgressor would go into a prison from which he could not emerge until he had paid "the very last mite."

Theosophy, the mother of religions, thus shows us the great fundamental truths, and enables us to see, in some degree, how the various religions have made turbid the waters of the perennial fountain of truth. Selfishness and misconception lie at the root of the false dogmas. In this day many have come to feel

that these dogmas are not true, but it is by the help of the Wisdom-Religion that men are able to see the original fundamental truths and understand how, in so many cases, these truths have been forsaken and perverted.

The New Era in which we are fortunate enough to live, has as its key note or grand design, UNITY. The many tribes, races, families of mankind have gone to different parts of the earth, and each has developed certain qualities peculiar to itself. The time has now come for them to recognize that all are members of *one family;* and to join together in mutual enrichment, in harmonious unity; each, in this way becoming heir to the thousands of years of racial development achieved by the whole human family. Many things are working together to this end. On material lines the nations are being bound together by electric wires, and lines of communication, and unity of interests. Even so on inner planes, subtle currents are linking men together. The great things we did together in the long forgotten past will be eclipsed by the still more

glorious achievements we shall unitedly accomplish in the Golden Age ahead of us. But among the things that tend to harmony and unification, nothing is more potent than *true* religion. And as we see that the ancestral Wisdom which we had about man and the universe is ours once again, we shall join hands, and the veil of covering shall be removed from all flesh, for we shall see eye to eye, and new pages of the Wisdom-Religion will unfold as we need them and are able to use them wisely.

To compare the ethics and ideals of the various religions with each other and with the Wisdom-Religion, is difficult, because most people have more or less prejudice in favor of some one religion; or if unprejudiced, each man naturally understands his own religion better than he can understand any other. Yet, notwithstanding these drawbacks, it is surely possible to make a fairly accurate survey of some of the great religions, or religious ideas, or symbols, for purposes of comparison.

On the question of ethics simply, it is not

difficult to point out the fundamental agreement existing between several of the great religions. The moral law is much the same in the commandments of Moses, and of Gautama Buddha. Truth, honesty, justice, purity, reverence for life, respect for parents, and the like; these are the common principles of morality in Christianity, Judaism, Hindûism, Buddhism, Mohammedanism, and Confucianism. Moreover, all great Teachers have recognized that love is the foundation of law, and is the fulfilment of the law. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you, is the positive aspect of the great law as taught by Christianity. Do not unto others what you would not have them do unto you, is the negative aspect of the same law of mutual consideration. And the philosophic basis of the commandment is the *unity of life,* the unity of humanity. It is because we are many members in one body, members one of another, and if one member suffer the other members must also suffer; it is because of this great fact that it is wrong to injure anyone. It is be-

cause of the unity of life that it is wrong to do anything to injure this unity — wrong to lie, or to steal, or to bear false witness. We call that thing wrong which is against the well-being or harmony of the whole, or any part of it.

The Jews recognized all sin as being first of all, against the Supreme Source of truth and right. Even in our law courts we have still some echo of this idea existing. It is the "People," or the "King," as the case may be, against the person who is charged with an offense. With some nations the Supreme Source of all receded more and more into the background of human consciousness, and the void was filled in the popular fancy by a host of gods and goddesses which personified some of the powers of nature, or some of the faculties of the human soul. Idolatry, in its more and more material aspects, marks the *lowest point of the arc, not the primeval point from which we have started; that primeval starting point was the Wisdom-Religion.* This, of course, is entirely opposed to the ordinary

views of modern science. But modern science, and modern history, begin where man begins to emerge from the lowest point of the cycle. Even the modern scientist believes that the finer and rarer precedes the denser. Our material earth is the last step in the process of materialization. The fluid, gaseous and ethereal states mark anterior stages of manifestation. If the scientists will only study the analogy of Nature faithfully they will be led to the portal of true Wisdom.

In maintaining the position that Theosophy is the mother of religions, it is necessary to distinguish between essentials and those things which are only external. Many things connected with the various cults have nothing Theosophic about them. They are modern; they are mere human accretions, or even perversions of the original teaching. Again, there are certain cults which may be regarded as having naturally sprung from the human mind viewing with awe and reverence the forces of nature. Yet even these, in their pure and primitive forms, were probably given by Great

Teachers, who used symbols to a large extent in their teaching; for, as H. P. Blavatsky explains,* those Great Teachers knew that words would be forgotten in the course of ages, therefore they used the picture teaching of symbols, which would be more easily preserved. Consequently the various cults, such as sun-worship, star worship, serpent worship, sex worship, tree worship, and nature worship generally, were at first pure and lofty. The symbolic was regarded as merely symbolic. It was only during the course of long ages that the symbolic teaching became gradually degraded as the human race itself sank deeper and deeper into materialism.

* *The Secret Doctrine,* volume I, page 473.

V

SEPTENARY NATURE AND MAN

AT all times the essential thing, lying behind all outward signs, has been a love of Perfect Truth, of Absolute Good; and a realization that man is truly the offspring of the Most High. Also, that the Divine Life is a Unity though seen in manifestation under a countless variety of forms. In a word, we should endeavor to realize the Divine as both transcendent, or above all, and immanent, or in all manifestation. This has always been the aim of the Wisdom-Religion, as manifesting through the Divine Principle in man; or through the express teaching of those Great Souls, who call themselves our Brothers, though they have developed far beyond ordinary humanity. It is this which gives the Wisdom-Religion its unique position and its strong claim upon us; it is the teaching of

the Great Helpers of humanity, and it is also capable of verification as the real Self in each of us rises to the high plane of development which our Elder Brothers reached ages ago. But even beyond that, it is in a large degree capable of being demonstrated to the reasoning mind — a principle in us which is lower than the spiritual or divine Ego. For instance, when Theosophy tells us that man is sevenfold, and that nature is sevenfold, we have a teaching which our reason leads us to accept because we meet so many evidences of it. Nor does it require much demonstration to show that this teaching must have been given by ancient Sages, for we find it in the oldest religions. If we begin with the present and go backward, we shall be astonished at the amount of evidence existing.

We think of the seven days of the week, one of which is the day of rest, and we are at once reminded that in both color and sound the septenary law rules. There are seven notes in the musical scale, and seven prismatic colors. Human life is divided into periods of

seven years. It is an old saying that man has seven senses, though only five are in use generally. Some philosophers have spoken of man as having seven obvious parts; and seven internal organs; and seven foci through which the soul acts. The seventh day, or the fourteenth, was regarded as critical for certain diseases. The human offspring is viable in the seventh month, and in the seventh year the child undergoes an important change, which some religions recognize, having borrowed it from the Ancient Wisdom. Life on the earth is powerfully influenced by the revolution of the moon in 4 times 7 days. Human life, as we see from Shakespeare, was divided into seven ages. These seven stages were closely associated with the seven planets of astrology. These are but a few of the instances in which we find the number seven very prominent in Nature.

Now, if we glance at some of the ancient religions, or races, we shall see how important a place was held by the number seven. From our Northern forefathers we have the seven

days of the week, and their names. Among the ancients a symbol for the universe was a ship with seven pilots. In India, says Mr. Subba Rao, it was taught that there were six primary forces of Nature resumed in a seventh. Among the ancient Greeks, Apollo, the Sun God, was called the sevenfold or ἑβδομαγέτης. Among the Persians the number seven was held sacred to Mithras, the Sun God. Plato tells us that from the number seven was generated the soul of the world. Among the ancient Hebrews the sacred ladder had seven steps of ascent, the love of God; and seven steps of descent, the love of one's neighbor. On the ancient Assyrian tablets were represented seven gods of the sky, and seven gods of the earth. Among the Freemasons seven members make a perfect lodge, though five may hold one. Among the ancient Aryans the number seven was sacred. There were seven sages, seven planes of the universe, seven holy islands. In the Bible we find seven as the sacred number, from Genesis with its seven days, to the Revelation with

its seven churches, seven angels, seven candlesticks, seven trumpets, seven kings, seven vials poured out. The seventh day, the seventh month, the seventh year, and seven times seven, the Jubilee, all show how Jewish national life was permeated with the sacredness of the number seven. The teaching that the *land* should have its sabbaths, or rests, and not only men and animals, indicates a profound knowledge of nature, obtained either by direct teaching, or as the result of long experience. Modern science recognizes that the life of metals, or machinery is prolonged by periodic rests. And the lack of rest for the land is diminishing very much the productiveness of not a few parts of America, and of other countries. The Hebrews, with good reason, connected national well-being with keeping the sabbaths. In so doing they were working in harmony with nature, which, as Theosophy shows, is sevenfold.

Now, if we examine this fact, that nations so far apart should have the sacredness of the number seven as a basic principle in life, and

in religion, we have a strong indication that they must, in some distant past, have obtained this knowledge from one and the same primal source — the ancient Wisdom-Religion. Let us turn to the exposition of the ancient wisdom, as given by H. P. Blavatsky in *The Secret Doctrine,* a work which she has written as a commentary on the ancient book of Dzyan. If this book of Dzyan, with the other ancient records, could be placed before the world, and if the mysterious ideographic characters could be read and could be understood by scholars, then nothing further would be needed to prove that the *Gupta Vidyâ,* the ancient hidden wisdom, was indeed the fountain of knowledge, the mother of religions. But this cannot be done. The ancient records are preserved with great care, and some of them are "accessible only to the *highest initiates.*" We must be thankful to H. P. Blavatsky for the sample she has given us, and still more so for her explanation of the translation. A few samples will show this.

In regard to the Universe, *before* the Great

Breath went forth, we read: "The Eternal Parent, wrapped in her ever invisible robes, had slumbered once again for seven eternities." "The seven sublime Lords and the Seven Truths had ceased to be." Then, at the beginning of manifestation we read: "The last vibration of the seventh eternity thrills through infinitude." "Then the three fall into the four. The radiant essence becomes seven inside, seven outside." From stage to stage of manifestation we find the sacred number seven. "Listen, ye Sons of the Earth, to your instructors — the Sons of the Fire. Learn, there is neither first nor last, for all is one: number issued from no number." "Learn what we who descend from the Primordial Seven, we who are born from the Primordial Flame have learned from our fathers." And again: "Thus were formed the Rûpa and the Arûpa: from the one light seven lights; and from each of the seven, seven times seven lights." All through the account of the genesis of the universe, or of this planet, the number seven is found. No wonder then that

fragments, dim memories of the ancient teaching should be found in the Old Testament, in the sacred writings of India, Persia, Egypt, and of every other nation.

And when we turn to Anthropogenesis, the origin of humanity, we find the number seven very prominent. The earth is sevenfold, man is sevenfold. The earth passes through seven stages or rounds — we are now in the fourth. In each round there are seven Root Races, and in each Race seven sub-races. No wonder then that H. P. Blavatsky says,

> Number Seven, the fundamental figure among all other figures in every national religious system, from Cosmogony down to man, must have its ***raison d'être.*** It is found among the ancient Americans, as prominently as among the archaic Âryans and Egyptians. — (*The Secret Doctrine,* II, 34)

The septenary nature of man, as taught by Theosophy, is thus seen to be in harmony with the basic number of the manifested universe. This was known to the ancient Egyptians, but it disappeared from ordinary teachings, at least in the West, during the time of a de-

scending cycle. Modern languages have no terms for the seven principles of man; not until we go back to ancient Egypt and ancient India do we find names for these principles. In the New Testament, only a threefold division of man — body, soul and spirit — is given. And as a result of this we find St. Paul, and other writers, when speaking of the higher Manas and the lower Manas, much hampered to make their meaning clear. In the Old Testament we do not find a full account of all the human principles either; though in the esoteric teachings of the Hebrews, as appears from the Kabalah, they evidently had obtained, or preserved, part of the ancient Wisdom-Religion, as did the Egyptians and the Hindûs. This will be seen at a glance by comparing the two plates given in *Isis Unveiled* (II, 264), where the ancient Indian and ancient Hebrew conceptions of the Universe very closely correspond. It may not be amiss to notice that between the obvious teaching of the Old Testament and the Hebrew esoteric lore, a vast difference exists.

VI

ESOTERIC AND EXOTERIC TEACHINGS

IT is well known that there is very little, some have thought nothing, about the future life in the early part of the Bible. It is concerned about this life chiefly, and about right living here, not about the state of the soul after death. Keep the Commandments, that thy days may be long in the land, is the burden of the teaching. And if a modern Orientalist is correct in supposing that the Hebrews had an exoteric form of religion for the mass of the people, and an esoteric teaching for the "elect," it is only what we find to be the fact with other old religions also. This inner teaching was handed down orally to those selected to receive it. The "schools of the prophets" probably existed not only in the days of Elisha and of Samuel, but all

through the history of the Hebrew people. It must have been always a difficult matter to know when, and how much of this occult teaching to give out to the world, or to the mass of the people generally. While, on the one hand it is wrong to withhold the bread of life, or the light; on the other hand, as we know from experience, it is a mistake to give knowledge, or to try to give it, to men before they are ready for it, before they hunger and thirst for truth. And in all ages, so far as we know, the Light-bringer was regarded as an angel of darkness rather than an angel of light. The writer of *The Secret Doctrine,* the Harbinger of the Wisdom-Religion in our own day, shared the same fate. "Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute?"

THE MYSTERIES

"THE MYSTERIES" is the term applied to the secret wisdom which was handed down from teacher to pupil under solemn promise not to divulge it except in the manner in which

he himself had received it. In addition to this, it is evident that it was a matter of attaining to inward illumination, or spiritual development, rather than the mere imparting and receiving of knowledge. No doubt, according to the great law of Nature, as each higher plane helps that below it, the pupil was helped, and taught, and trained by his elders, but the end of it all was that he might attain to that condition in which he should know for himself. To know the truth really *he himself had to become one with it.* To tread the Path, he had to become that Path himself. To know God he had to become one with the divine within himself. This "Knowledge," from the very nature of the case, must have ever been, and must ever continue to be the "Great Secret." As knowledge is power, and as power may be used selfishly, it is easy to see why many things were kept hidden from the mass of the people. This was not to keep men in darkness, but to keep powerful instruments out of the hands of the selfish. Knowledge is a two-edged sword, and he who uses

it or any faculty unwisely, injures himself even more than he injures others. Notwithstanding all the care used, much knowledge was employed selfishly during the evil days of the Fourth Race, the Atlantean, and the world has not yet gotten rid of the bad effects.

These "Mysteries" were the outcome, or the consolidation of the ancient Wisdom-Religion which had long previously come to man in the Third Race, the Lemurian, when the Sons of Mind, the Mânasaputra, descended upon earth and took upon them the human form, becoming our spiritual ancestors. For man being sevenfold, has a spiritual heredity as well as a physical and an astral. From many sources we get hints about the "Mysteries." Aristotle considered that the welfare of Greece was secured by the Eleusinian Mysteries. Socrates says, "Those who are acquainted with the mysteries insure to themselves very pleasing hopes against the hour of death, as well as for the whole of their lives." Cicero writes, "When these mysteries are explained we prove not to have learned so much

of the nature of the Gods, as of the things themselves, or of the truths we stand in need of." Sallust tells us, "the intention of all mystic ceremonies is to conjoin us with the world of the Gods." Plutarch affirms that in the mysteries, "The First Cause of all things is communicated." One of the Christian fathers, Clemens Alexandrinus, writes, "The doctrines delivered in the greater mysteries are concerning the Universe. Here all instruction ends. *Things are seen as they are;* and Nature, and the things of Nature, are given to be comprehended." Plato says, "The design of the mysteries is to lead us back to the perfection from which, as a principle, we first made our descent." Again, he declared it was "difficult to find the Father and Molder of the Universe; and when found, impossible to discover him to all the world." We may compare this with what is written in the *Book of Job,* which is said to be a book of *initiation.* Job, when the climax of the whole drama is reached, declares, "I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth

thee." And in the book of *Ecclesiasticus* it is written, "At first, she (Wisdom) will walk with him by crooked ways, and bring fear and dread upon him, and torment him with her discipline until she may trust his soul, and try him by her laws. Then will she return the straight way unto him, and comfort him, and *show him her secrets.*"

Philo says of the Jewish teachers, "They changed the words and precepts of wisdom into allegories, *after the custom of their ancestors.*" Maimonides writes, "Whoever shall find out the true meaning of the book of Genesis ought to take care not to divulge it." In the ancient Egyptian Ritual we read, "This book is the greatest of all mysteries. Do not let the eye of anyone see it; that is detestable. Learn it. Hide it." In *Isis Unveiled* H. P. Blavatsky records much about the mysteries. We learn that whether in ancient Egypt, Greece, Persia or India, the object of the mysteries was much the same. "The unity of God, the immortality of the Spirit, belief in salvation only through our works, merit and

demerit; are the principal articles of faith in the Wisdom-Religion, and the groundwork of Vedaism, Buddhism, Parseeism, and such we find to have been even that of the ancient Osirism, when we, after abandoning the popular Sun-God of the materialism of the rabble, confine our attention to the *Books of Hermes,* the thrice-great." In the books of Manu we find similar teaching: "The man who recognizes the Supreme Soul, in his own Soul, as well as in all creatures, and who is equally just to all (whether men or animals) obtains the happiest of all fates, that to be finally absorbed in the bosom of Brahmâ." "Of all the duties the principle one is to acquire the knowledge of the Supreme Soul (the spirit); it is the first of all sciences, *for it alone confers on man immortality.*" This reminds us of the words of Jesus (John xvii. 3), where he says that "to know the Father as the true God is eternal life." In the Persian *Desatir* it is written, "Whatever is *on earth is the semblance and* SHADOW *of something that is in the sphere;* while that resplendent thing (the

prototype of the Soul-Spirit) remains in *unchangeable* condition it is well also with its shadow. But when the *resplendent one* removeth far from its shadow, life removeth from the latter to a distance. And yet that very light is the shadow of something still more resplendent than itself." (*Isis Unveiled,* II, p. 113) Proclus said, " in all the initiations and mysteries the gods exhibit many forms of themselves, and appear in a *variety of shapes,* and sometimes, indeed, a formless light of themselves is held forth to the view; sometimes this light is according *to a human form,* and sometimes it proceeds into a different shape."

From these " mysteries " the great religions of the world had their origin. As the mysteries were only for the few who had been tried and found worthy, a popular form of teaching, based upon them, was given to the public. This was, of course, symbolic; and the tendency of the lower mind in man is to drag down, and materialize things spiritual; hence the degradation of the mysteries, and the lapse

into idolatry. For the essence of idolatry is ever the same, it is the worship of a sign or symbol instead of the thing represented by the symbol. Hence the great need from age to age, for Messengers, Teachers, Reformers to come and lift up the world to that light from which it has fallen. And this is true, though, according to the great law of Progress, the cycles of the world's life are on the whole onward and upward. We find this thought of restoration, or purification, prominent in several religions. In regard to Judaism, which directly or indirectly, has such a widespread influence on all Western nations, we find a notable hint given by Jesus on one occasion. Speaking of a certain custom, Jesus said that Moses permitted this because of the hardness of their hearts, but "*from the beginning it was not so.*" And as to the true Law, he said he came not to destroy the Law, but to fulfil it, or to fill it full of a deeper significance than they supposed it to possess. Again he said, they had "made the Law of none effect by their traditions."

VII

A CYCLICAL REGENERATION

IF we look at Brâhmanism and Buddhism, we shall find that S'âkyamuni came to *restore,* not to destroy anything really good and true. The primal teaching had, through long ages, been made of none effect by a declining sacerdotalism; just as the teaching of the Mosaic Law had been through Phariseeism. There was need for renewal, rebirth, restoration. Hence, one of the Great Teachers, one who had much to do with giving the Wisdom-Religion to this generation, said that *"pre-Vedic Budhism"* was the teaching which he and his companions proclaimed. This can only mean the ancient Wisdom-Religion, the heritage given by the Sons of Light, when the lands and seas of the world were very different from what they now are.

As Brâhmanism declined, S'âkyamuni came

to enlighten and restore; and met the natural opposition of a declining priesthood. But in the course of time Buddhism also declined, and a restoration was needed. This was only partially accomplished by various great teachers; so that a real return to the *"pre-Vedic* Buddhism" is needed for modern Buddhism as well as for Brâhmanism. This fresh re-issue of the waters of Truth from the ancient source is afforded in Theosophy.

Among the Israelites Moses came to teach and purify, but in the course of ages the Scribes and Pharisees "sat in Moses' seat"; and made the law of none effect. Jesus came to restore, to lead men back to the light; but before long the various ecclesiastical divisions obscured, and well-nigh buried out of sight the teaching of Jesus. Therefore, according to the Great Law that guides the progress of the world, a new Teacher had to come in the Nineteenth century. She came to a world needing the life-giving light of the Spirit, instead of materialism. She came to give new impulse and right direction to a world that was

wandering far from the true Path. She came to give, on a vaster scale than had ever been given before, a new revelation embracing Cosmogenesis and Anthropogenesis, Religion, Science, Philosophy — the revelation of the universe to man, and of man to himself; this was the scope of her mission. And her revelation, as she herself says, was not her own, but was simply a portion of the great Wisdom-Religion, while more remains to be given out at the end of the Twentieth century, or at some future time, as man becomes ready for it.

It is according to wisdom that in a declining cycle certain truths are not given out. The septenary nature of man and of the universe is one of these simple yet basic truths, and it was not given out during the Dark Ages. We have now entered on a new age, an ascending cycle, and that makes possible the increase of light. Yet, even so, knowledge is being used selfishly, and consequently to the hurt of humanity; but working in harmony with the Life and Purpose of the universe we may with open vision, like the prophet of

old, see that "they that are with us are more than they that are with them." We may realize the truth of the words of the New Testament, "Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world."

THE VALUE OF EACH RELIGION

THE various religions which have sprung from their parent, the Wisdom-Religion, though they have failed in many respects, in every case have accomplished something. Just as races, or nations, or individuals, have separate messages to give, so each religion has its separate note to sound in the complete harmony of the whole.

The well-known author, James Freeman Clarke, in his *Ten Great Religions,* has made an attempt to indicate what the various religions failed in doing, and what they severally accomplished. "The essential value of Brâhmanism," he says, "is its faith in spirit as distinct from matter, eternity as distinct from time, the infinite as opposed to the finite, sub-

stance as opposed to form." But, he thinks, it does not explain the world, it simply denies it. He thinks it is incapable of morality, of true worship, and also that it does not really teach immortality because it neglects the absolute distinction between right and wrong, and teaches absorption instead of immortality. The system of Confucius he regards as having done good work in teaching morality; in its reverence for the past; and in its respect for useful institutions. Buddhism, he says, "has done good in teaching the relation of the soul to the laws of nature; its doctrine of consequences (Karma), and its promise of an ultimate salvation in consequence of good works." But he regards it as having "the defect that belongs to all legalism." The religious teachings of the Eddas, and of Zoroaster he groups together because "they both recognize the evil in the world as real, and teach the duty of fighting against it. They avoid the pantheistic indifference of Brâhmanism, and the absence of enthusiasm in the systems of Confucius and Buddha."

The Semitic religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Mohammedanism, proclaimed a pure monotheism, and consequently it was only after contact with Persia that we find in the Jewish scriptures any mention of an *evil principle,* and then it is not the Satan of orthodoxy, but rather the heavenly critic who appears among the sons of God, as stated in the book of Job. A *perfect* conception of the Divine transcendence precludes the notion of a Devil. In Egypt, as in northern Europe, the divine was seen chiefly in the various powers of nature. In Greece the divine was seen in man rather than in nature.

The form of religion known as "ancestor worship," was, and to some extent still is, very wide-spread. It was also very ancient. Not only China and Japan, but Greece, Rome, and nearly every part of the world has seen this form of religion. It was no doubt one of the early shoots from the Wisdom-Religion. It seems to have sprung from several elements, one of which was the knowledge that in his real nature, man is an immortal spirit. An-

other element was, that between the Absolute and our present humanity, countless orders of finite beings exist. It was also a perpetuation and an extension beyond death of parental relationship and was, therefore, rooted in natural affection. The wonderful persistence of it is seen in the East; and it is said that the public devotion to the "ancestors" recently shown by the Emperor of Japan has done much to strengthen the ancient religion, which neither Buddhism nor any other teaching has been able to stamp out.

VIII

TEACHING BY MYTHS AND SYMBOLS

THE study of myths and symbols has been very suggestive of an earlier and more universal religion than any now existing. The wide-spread influence of certain myths, and the fact that certain symbols have been found in lands far apart and belonging to times very remote, point to a common origin in a pre-historic past. Of these symbols the cross, in its various forms, is of great antiquity. In *The Secret Doctrine,* Vol. II, p. 557, we read:

> Verily may the Cross be traced back into the very depths of the unfathomable Archaic Ages. Its Mystery deepens rather than clears, as we find it on the statues of Easter Island — in old Egypt, in Central Asia, engraved on rocks as Tau and Svastika, in pre-Christian Scandinavia, everywhere!

In *The Secret Doctrine,* Vol. II. page 99,

H. P. Blavatsky says that the Svastika form of cross has many meanings:

In the *Macrocosmic* work, the "HAMMER OF CREATION," with its four arms bent at right angles, refers to the continual *motion* and revolution of the invisible Kosmos of Forces. In that of the manifested Kosmos and our Earth, it points to the rotation in the cycles of Time of the world's axes and their equatorial belts; the two lines forming the *Svastika* ✠ meaning Spirit and Matter, the four hooks suggesting the motion in the revolving cycles. Applied to the *Microcosm,* Man, it shows him to be a link between heaven and Earth, the right hand being raised at the end of a horizontal arm, the left pointing to the Earth. . . . It is not too much to say that the compound symbolism of this universal and most suggestive of signs contains the key to the seven great mysteries of Kosmos.

In ancient Scandinavia it was the hammer of Thor. Dr. Schliemann found it in two forms *under* the ruins of ancient Troy.

The symbol of the *Tree* was also very ancient, and universal. Among the Scandinavians it was *Yggdrasil,* the tree of Existence. Among the ancient Hindûs it was Aśvattha, the world-tree. In Egypt the sycamore tree

was sacred to Hathor. In the Bible, from the first of Genesis to the last of Revelation, we find the tree frequently used in a symbolical sense. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and the tree of life are in the Garden of Eden. And in the heaven of the Apocalypse, the tree of life bears fruit every month, and its leaves are for the healing of the nations. In the ancient writings of the Wisdom-Religion the Sons of MAHAT are quickeners of the human Plant. (*The Secret Doctrine,* II, 103)

The *Sun,* as we might naturally expect, was in all lands, and from the most ancient times, regarded with great reverence. In a simple untutored race it would be quite natural to expect men to show reverence to the source of light and life. One of the first white men to come into contact with the natives of the distant interior of South Africa tells how they bowed to the sun as he rose above the horizon, "because he warmed them." But between this simple and very natural form of gratitude, and the elaborate conceptions of Egypt and of other ancient lands, a vast difference exists.

Mr. Owen Morgan, as quoted in *Egyptian Belief and Modern Thought,* says:

It is a common error to suppose that the ancients worshipped the sun. They did nothing of the kind. They worshipped the Eternal Spirit, which in Egypt went under the name of Osiris, and in Britain under the name of Celi, the *concealed;* and regarded the sun as the first-begotten of the Father, and of the inert confusion of matter.

Mr. Bonwick quotes from the Vedas, the Upanishads, and the Yasna Avesta of the Persians, severally, as follows:

Let us adore the supremacy of the Divine Sun, the Deity who illuminates all, from whom all proceed, are renovated, and to whom all must return; whom we invoke to direct our intellects aright in our progress to his holy seat.

And from the Upanishad:

It is I, O Brahmâ, who adore thee under the form of the resplendent sun. O sun, eternal, hearken unto my prayer!

The Avesta calls the sun "without beginning and without end." Kennedy, speaking of the Hindû religions, says that the sun "appears under two perfectly distinct characters; the

one as the Supreme Being, the other as the inferior deity, the regent of the "solar orb." In the course of ages the symbol became in itself an object of worship. Thus idolatry originates, and it assumes various forms. It is the worship of the letter rather than of the spirit. It is the tendency to materialize where we should look to the spiritual, or ideal. It is narrowing and limiting, where we should ever study to reach upward to the limitless and the supreme. Yet, as the human mind is constituted, for the vast majority of mankind at least, forms must be used to give definiteness. To the Magus, whom Sir E. Arnold, in *The Light of the World,* makes say:

> Om, Amitâya! oh,
> The Immeasurable! What word but doeth wrong
> Clothing the Eternal in the forms of Now?
> Our great Lord Buddha would not name Him once,

Mary of Magdala replies:

> If no name be,
> Will not the weak soul say, "naught is to name."

But the tendency of worship through forms, has in most cases been, not to open up vaster and wider heavens to the adoring vision, but rather to place the worshipper with his back to the light, so to speak, and to make the objects of his worship, images, or shadows, of himself, more and more limited and material. This is as true of so-called Christians today as it was of the Chaldaeans thousands of years ago. "God is spirit," said Jesus, "and to worship truly we must worship in spirit and in truth."

The fact that the prophets of Israel were loud in their denunciations of the idolatry into which solar symbolism had degenerated, did not prevent their using such expressions as "The Lord God is a sun and shield," (Ps. lxxxiv), "The sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in his wings." (Mal. iv) And in the New Testament we find in Rev. xix, these words, "And I saw an angel standing in the sun." Solar symbology is not only widespread, but exists to our own day in forms little suspected. For writers on symbology

tell us that the pointed pyramid, or obelisk, is a solar symbol, and is seen in the spires and pinnacles of old churches; even as it is seen in Lapland, ancient Egypt, ancient America, ancient India, and China. Even the weather-cock has the same significance; the cock, according to Pausanius, being sacred to the sun, as the herald of the day. And in the symbolic writing of the Chinese this symbol is used. Du Halde, Vol. II, says "They, the Chinese, in representing the sun put a cock in a circle."

And as regards myths, if we have the patience to trace them to their source, they will lead us back to the origin of religions and races; back to that ancient time when there was one great religion, the Wisdom-Religion, which was the synthesis of science, religion, and philosophy — Divine Wisdom, truly, for it had its origin in the Divine Teachers, and in the Divine Self within Humanity.

The *mythos* was an ancient form of teaching. Like the story, or parable, or symbol, it expressed much — revealing truth to the wise and hiding it from the foolish — and it

was a form of teaching easily remembered. The myths of Prajâpati, of Prometheus, of Osiris, all carry us back to the Wisdom-Religion, which alone can fully explain them. They all have the same message concerning the Divine in man. They all point to human progress and to the return of man and the universe to the Infinite Source whence all things proceeded.

The creation legends, the legends of fallen angels, and of giants, are all the broken lights that have come from the Wisdom-Religion. The story of Atlas takes us back to Atlantean times, and even to the Lemurian age, when the mountain range was thrice its present height, and when it might be said to support the heavens.

There is, however, one point which it is well to note carefully. H. P. Blavatsky tells us that in the Wisdom-Religion, the mythos or symbol had not one key only but *seven* keys. It is the tendency of some learned writers who are acquainted with but one key, the physiological, or the astronomical, to im-

agine that their explanation covers the whole ground, and to ride their particular theory to death; whereas a wider knowledge would give a sounder view of Nature as septenary.

Through long ages of separation, each family, race, or religion, has treasured its own form of the primal Wisdom, and has come to regard all other forms as false. This is a great mistake, but like most drawbacks, there has been this compensating influence; it has given intensity and devotion to the adherents of each system. It is a fact well known to the careful student of religions or sects today, that not infrequently, the narrower the creed, the more deeply in earnest are its adherents; and often, too, the more illiberal a sect is intellectually, the readier are its adherents to give and suffer for their narrow faith. While on the other hand, a broad and liberal form of thought is often accompanied with lack of intensity and lack of liberality to give for it, and suffer for it. When the river is narrow it moves along with great force, and cuts a deep channel; but when its waters broaden

out over many acres the stream loses in energy and can hardly turn a single mill. But the time has now come for mankind to find unity; to realize that all religions have had the same Mother — the Wisdom-Religion; to realize that all nations and all men are rays of the same Divine Being; and that by seeking this unity we shall progress to a higher plane of life. For Paradise regained is more than Eden restored. When we get to a point in the ascending cycle corresponding to the Third Root Race we shall have attained not only to great heights of spirituality, but also to that Wisdom which comes through many aeons of experience. In other words, the ascending angels on the great ladder reaching from earth to heaven, will be superior to those descending.

DOGMATIC TANGENTS

In maintaining that Theosophy is the mother of religions, it is not claimed that *all* forms of religion have sprung from the ancient Wisdom. It is well known that the modern orthodox

teaching in the West holds to the doctrine of Creation, that is, making out of *nothing,* in the strict sense of the term. It denies the dictum *ex nihilo nihil fit.* It declares that the *emanation* theory of the East is false. On this point, at least, an irreconcilable difference exists between modern western religions and the ancient Wisdom-Religion. And yet a proper understanding of the Eastern teaching about *Mâyâ* might serve to show how western orthodoxy arose. In the *Bhagavad Gîtâ* Krishna declares that:

> Though myself unborn, of changeless essence, and the lord of all existence, yet, in presiding over nature — which is mine — I am born but through my own *Mâyâ,* the mystic power of self-ideation, the eternal thought in the eternal mind.

Some of the uses of the word *create* in the Old Testament may refer to this power of *Mâyâ,* or causing to appear; for example in Is. xlv: "I form the light, and *create darkness.* I make peace, and *create evil.*" Darkness and evil are not positive entities, but only the shadows cast by Light, and by Good.

And it is worthy of note that the text which is specially quoted as proving *creation* to be distinct from making, only proves that the present order of things was not the source of things in the beginning — "By faith we understand that the worlds (aeons) have been framed by the word of God, so that what is seen hath not been made out of things which do appear." (Hebrews xi. 3) This passage, which speaks of aeons being framed by the Divine Word, is only another illustration of how the Wisdom-Religion underlies all religions. And when these religions understand themselves they will realize how much they owe to the Ancient Wisdom.

This is not the place to speak of Karma and Reincarnation, except to point out that these integral parts of the ancient teaching can be easily seen to be the workings of Nature. We see the law of seed-time and harvest, and whether we like it or not, "we reap the seed we sow, the hands that smite us are our own." What we call *Law* is a mode by which the One Life acts. And as

to Rebirth, it will be found that those who object to it do so because they do *not view life from the standpoint of the soul, but from that of the body.* As the body has many days and nights, so has the soul in the long journey, and when the goal of all manifestation is reached, and the GREAT BREATH returns to ITSELF, the result of all the billions of years of progress is not annihilation. We do merge, or become one with the Eternal Parent, but we go forth again as the Divine Word of a new period of manifestation, after the "Seven Eternities."

As men realize the unity of their origin, and the unity of religion underlying all existing differences, it must tend powerfully towards real and lasting harmony and peace. We are many members in one body. We are all rays from the GREAT SUN. In our heart of hearts we can feel that the great primal truths of justice, uprightness, compassion are our common heritage, because they pertain to the ONE SPIRIT which is over all, and through all, and in us all.

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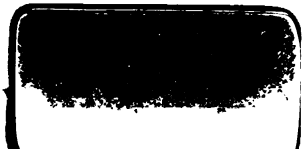
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